



Tools for understanding the agricultural production systems  
and their socio-economic context  
in target regions for the introduction of new banana cultivars

Seasonal calendar focus group discussion

Developed for the project  
“Improvement of banana for smallholder farmers in the Great Lakes region of Africa”

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The choice of tools to use in this baseline research was inspired by the publication:

Christinck, A., Weltzien, E., and Hoffmann, V. 2005. Setting breeding objectives and developing seed systems with farmers: a handbook for practical use in participatory plant breeding projects. Margraf Verlag, Weikersheim.

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## Ethics

This research protocol, IRB Proposal No. 2014-089, was approved by the Human Subjects Committee of Clark University on 19/06/2015.

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## BACKGROUND

Within the framework of the IITA-led project “Improvement of banana for smallholder farmers in the Great Lakes region of Africa” (also known as the “Breeding Better Bananas” project, <http://breedingbetterbananas.org>), Bioversity International and partners conducted baseline research in the target regions of Luweero and Mbarara in Uganda, and Bukoba, Meru, Moshi and Rungwe in Tanzania during 2015-2016, prior to conducting on-station and on-farm evaluations of new NARITA banana cultivars (<http://www.promusa.org/NARITA+hybrids>).

Five tools were used to characterise the banana and agricultural production systems, and the socioeconomic context of these systems, in the target regions. The research used a mixed-methods, participatory and sex-disaggregated approach to ensure that the knowledge, experiences and opinions of as many people as possible were obtained.

The understanding gained from the baseline research will:

- be fed into the banana breeding pipeline at multiple entry points to assist with breeding banana cultivars that better meet the requirements of the users. Some of these entry points are: setting of breeding targets; selection of parent material; evaluation in regional on-station and on-farm trials; participatory varietal selection taking into account the criteria (or ‘trait preferences’) that are important to multiple and different users; facilitating access to and adoption of the new cultivars by farmers and other end-users through scaling up the supply of clean planting materials and ensuring equitable distribution of these through the ‘seed’ systems;
- inform the ongoing adaptive management of the project activities to ensure fair participation and decision-making by people in the affected communities;
- provide the baseline to evaluate, in conjunction with the endline, the impact of adoption of the new cultivars on households, and individuals within, in the target regions.

The five tools developed and/or adapted from existing tools for the baseline research were:

- 1. Baseline intra-household survey**  
English version; Kiswahili version; XForms version for mobile data collection
- 2. Trait preferences for banana products and varieties focus group discussion**  
English version; Kiswahili version
- 3. Seasonal calendar focus group discussion**  
English version; Kiswahili version
- 4. Weekly and daily calendar focus group discussion**  
English version; Kiswahili version
- 5. Community wealth ranking focus group discussion**  
English version; Kiswahili version

# SEASONAL CALENDAR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

## SECTION A: EXERCISE INFORMATION

A1. Date of interview (dd/mm/yyyy) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

A2. Start time (hh:mm) \_\_\_\_\_

A3. End time (hh:mm) \_\_\_\_\_

A4. Name of enumerator 1 (facilitator) \_\_\_\_\_

A5. Name of enumerator 2 (note taker) \_\_\_\_\_

A6. Name of enumerator 3 (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

A7. Country \_\_\_\_\_

A8. Region (UG only) \_\_\_\_\_

A9. Region (TZ)/District (UG) \_\_\_\_\_

A10. District (TZ)/Sub-county (UG) \_\_\_\_\_

A11. Ward (TZ)/Parish (UG) \_\_\_\_\_

A12. Village \_\_\_\_\_

A13. Please indicate the category of respondents for this focus group (*W = women; M = men, B = both women and men*) \_\_\_\_\_

A14. Tool use number (*the number of times the tool has been conducted*) \_\_\_\_\_

A15. Exercise code<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> The exercise code is designated by combining: the first three letters from **A9**, e.g. 'LUW'; the first three letters from **A10**, e.g. 'MAK'; the first three letters from **A12**, e.g. 'KAB'; the code of the tool being used, e.g. 'SC'; **A13**, e.g. 'M'; **A14**, e.g. '001' = LUWMAKKABSCM001.

## SECTION B: INTRODUCTION AND INDIVIDUAL INFORMED CONSENT

*\*\*\*~ Please read this script to each and every participant as you greet them when they arrive, before you add their details to the roster of participants (Section C).*

“Thank you for coming today to participate in the **seasonal calendar** exercise where we will discuss the agricultural activities that take place in a typical year. We are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and we work on behalf of Bioversity International on a project where new matooke/ndizi (banana) hybrids, produced by NARO and IITA, will be tested for their performance in different regions of Uganda and Tanzania. If any of the varieties perform well, they will be recommended for official release and made available to farmers. Before we start this project, however, we would like to ask farmers in different regions about their banana production systems, banana varieties, banana products, households and communities – and that is why we are in your village at the moment to conduct household surveys and a number of different focus group discussions.

In the **seasonal calendar** exercise that we will do today, we will discuss the agricultural activities that take place in a typical year, including - the seasons, the crops grown in this village, the activities required to produce the most important crops, who does these activities, and other important times of the year. We expect that this activity will take around 90 minutes. The information that we gather during the exercise will help us to understand your production systems and all the activities and division of labour related to these, and will help us to plan any subsequent project activities that may take place in the village.

We would like to record what is said today so that we can make notes later, and we may take some photographs. Also, as some sensitive information might be shared within the group that could cause disharmony in the wider community, we ask you not share any information discussed here outside of this group.

Your participation today is entirely voluntary and you are free to leave now before we start, or at any time during the discussion.”

~~~~~

**B1. Do you have any questions for us?**

**B2. Having heard all of this information, are you still happy to participate in the seasonal calendar exercise?**

~~~~~

“Thank you.

Now I’d like to get a few details about you before we start.”

## SECTION C: ROSTER OF PARTICIPANTS

~\*\*~ All participants must consent to be interviewed if they wish to take part in the exercise (C1). If a participant does not consent to being photographed (C2), please inform the supervisor and ensure that no photographs are taken during the exercise.

	C1. Does the participant consent to participate in the exercise? (Yes/No)	C2. Does the participant consent to being photographed? (Yes/No)	C3. Name of participant	C4. Age of participant? (Years)	C5. Marital status of participant? (See code #1)	C6. Level of education of participant? (See code #2)	C7. Main occupation of participant? (See code #3)
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

**Codes: #1:** 1 = single, 2 = cohabitating, 3 = married (monogamous), 4 = married (polygamous), 5 = divorced, 6 = widowed, 7 = don't know, 8 = other, please specify.

**#2:** 1 = no formal education, 2 = nursery, 3 = primary, 4 = secondary, 5 = post-secondary, 6 = don't know, 7 = other, please specify.

**#3:** 1 = agriculture, 2 = livestock, 3 = business, self-employed, 4 = construction, bricklaying, 5 = transportation, 6 = timber, charcoal, wood products, 7 = non-timber forest products, 8 = housework, 9 = salaried professional, 10 = casual temporary labour, 11 = studying, 12 = no occupation (adult), 13 = don't know, 14 = other, please specify.

## SECTION D: SEASONAL CALENDAR EXERCISE – QUESTIONS & PROBES

“Let us start by introducing ourselves - please say your name and any other information that you want to share about yourself.”

### D1. Does anyone have any questions or comments before we begin?

\*\*\*~ Address any issues before starting the exercise.

~~~~~

“Now, let us begin the seasonal calendar exercise. To gain a better understanding of the farming activities in this village across the year, we are going to start by defining the climatic seasons.”

### D2. How many climatic seasons you experience in this village?

\*\*\*~ Seasons as based on the climate.

\*\*\*~ Draw a line at the top of the page, going from the left to the right, and state that this line represents a complete year. Delineate on this line when the different seasons start and finish.

~~~~~

### D3. What are the names of the seasons?

\*\*\*~ Label these seasons on the top of the seasonal calendar sheet, as we will organize the discussion around these seasons.

~~~~~

### D4. Which is the first season of the year? Which calendar month does this season start in and end in?

\*\*\*~ Confirm the length of time of season.

\*\*\*~ Mark the season on the line at the top of the page, and mark the corresponding calendar months.

### D5. Which season comes next? Which calendar month does season “X” start in and end in?

\*\*\*~ Confirm length of time of season.

\*\*\*~ Mark the season on the line at the top of the page, and mark the corresponding calendar months.

\*\*\*~ Repeat question as required until all seasons in a year have been mapped.

~~~~~

**D6. How are the seasons characterized? What is the following weather like in each of them:**

- rainfall
- temperature
- humidity
- wind
- storms
- anything else distinctive?

\*\*\*~ You can record the intensity of the weather types by increasing or decreasing (as appropriate) the size or the frequency of the symbols used to represent the weather type, e.g. three suns or one large sun to denote very high temperatures, whilst one sun or a small sun to denote low temperatures. Make sure the symbols and the signifier used to convey information about intensity are recorded in a legend.

~~~~~

“Now we will focus on agriculture in the village, including crops grown and activities involved in growing these crops.”

**D7. Which crops are grown in this village?**

\*\*\*~ Record a list of all the crops grown in the village.

~~~~~

**D8. Which crops would you say are the 3 most important crops in the village?**

\*\*\*~ For questions D8, D10, and D12, facilitate the discussion as the participants choose the 3 most important crops. Create a table to the side with ‘1<sup>st</sup>’, ‘2<sup>nd</sup>’, ‘3<sup>rd</sup>’, and record the crops there.

**D9. Why did you choose these crops? What makes them the most important?**

\*\*\*~ For questions D9, D11, and D13, before moving on, it is important to have the group reach a consensus about the 3 crops and why they were chosen. It is important to capture the decision-making logic that the group used to narrow their list down to three. If the group does not choose bananas in its three crop choices, ask the group where they would rank banana.

~~~~~



**D10. Which crops would you say are the 3 most important crops in the village when it comes to you as [men / women (as appropriate)] in the village? Would they be the same three crops as already selected (D8) or different?**

**D11. Why did you choose these crops? What makes them the most important for you as [men / women (as appropriate)]?**

~~~~~

**D12. Which crops would you say are the 3 most important crops in the village when it comes to your spouses as [men/women (as appropriate)] in the village? Would they be the same three crops as already selected (D8) or different?**

**D13. Why did you choose these crops? What makes them the most important for your spouses as [men/women (as appropriate)]?**

~~~~~

“Next we are going to map the activities involved in banana cultivation across the year onto the seasonal calendar. First we need to know – what activities are involved in banana cultivation, from planting a new plot, through to harvesting the bunches.”

**D14. What are all the activities involved in cultivating banana, from preparing the land for a new plot to harvesting the bunches?**

*\*\*\*~ Make a list of all the activities as they occur in chronological order. Remember to establish if everyone agrees or not, and if the list is complete or not. Number the activities in the list starting with ‘1’.*

*\*\*\*~ Use the checklist below for banana cultivation, processing and selling activities. If there are items from the checklist missing, please ask the group if they do these activities and if so, where they would include them on the calendar. This is not an exhaustive list; please add any other activities that participants provide!*

- *preparing the land, including the land preparation activities*
- *digging the holes*
- *selecting and preparing the suckers or other planting material*
- *feeding the plants with fertilizer, manure, organic matter, etc.*
- *watering the plants*
- *mulching the plants*
- *weeding the plot*
- *deleafing, desuckering, debudding, etc.*
- *managing the following suckers*
- *removing sick plants*
- *propping or staking banana plants*
- *harvesting the bunch for home consumption*
- *harvesting the bunch for selling*
- *any post-harvest activities, including any processing and/or selling*

~~~~~

“Now we will map these activities onto the seasonal calendar so that we know which activities take place in which seasons and months.”

**D15. When does “Activity 1” (as identified) take place?**

- When does “Activity 2” (as identified) take place?
- When does “Activity 3” (as identified) take place?

*~\*\*\*~ Repeat question as required until all activities listed in D14 have been mapped onto the seasonal calendar.*

*~\*\*\*~ Record the number of the activity in each month that it takes place, i.e. if “Activity 1” occurs in August, September, February, and March then record a “1” under each of these months, so that the calendar has “1” recorded four times.*

~~~~~

“Now that we have mapped all the activities involved in cultivating banana onto the seasonal calendar, the final stage is to go back to the list of activities and designate who does each activity – the men or the women or both. To do this we have four stars that we designate between men and women to the activity:

- if the men are the only ones who do that activity, then they receive all four of the stars;
- if the women are the only ones who do the activity, then they receive all four of the stars;
- if the men and women share that activity equally, then the men receive two stars and the women receive two stars;
- if an activity is mostly done by one group but the other group also helps a little, then the allocation of stars would be three to one.

Does everyone understand how we allocate the stars to men and women to show who participates in each of the activities?”

*~\*\*\*~ Use different coloured markers to denote the stars allocated to the men and to the women. Remember to include the coloured stars and which group they represent in the legend.*

**D16. Who does “Activity 1” (as identified)? How should the four stars be allocated between the men and the women?**

*~\*\*\*~ For questions D16, D17, and D18, use different coloured marker pen to denote the stars allocated to the men and to the women. Remember to include the coloured stars and which group they represent in the legend.*

**D17. Who does this activity in a female-headed household?**

**D18. Who does this activity in a male-headed household where no spouse is present?**

*~\*\*\*~ Repeat questions D16-D18 for each activity in the list (D14).*

~~~~~

**D19. Is the seasonal calendar and the activities for banana complete?**

~~~~~

“Now that the calendar for banana is complete, let’s map the activities for the second most important crop from our list.”

*\*\*\* Repeat questions D14-D19 for the second most important crop in the list (D8). These activities do not need to be in as much detail as banana activities, e.g.:*

- *planting*
- *management*
- *harvest*
- *post-harvest processing and/or selling activities.*

\*\*\*\*\*

“Now that the calendar for the second most important crop is complete, let’s map the activities for the third most important crop from our list.”

*\*\*\* Repeat questions D14-D19 for the third most important crop in the list (D8).*

\*\*\*\*\*

**D20. For the three crops that we have mapped on the calendar, can we say whether they are considered to be mens’ or womens’ crops?**

**D21. If yes, why - what is it about the crop(s) that make them a man’s or a woman’s crop?**

\*\*\*\*\*

“We now have an overview of agriculture activities for three important crops in the village. Let’s look at other important events”

*\*\*\* If time is running short, it’s OK to end the session now.*

*\*\*\* For questions D22, D23, and D24, record the events on the seasonal calendar, underneath the activities of the three crops.*

**D22. Is there a time of the year when there is an abundance of food in this village?**

**D23. Is there a time of the year when there is a shortage of food in this village?**

**D24. Is there a time of the year when other important events happen in this village? For example:**

- holidays
- social events
- community events
- religious events

\*\*\*\*\*

**D25. Is this calendar complete? Is there anything else you would like to add?**

“The seasonal calendar exercise is now complete. Thank you for being so generous with sharing your time, views, and experiences!”

~~~~~

## SECTION E: INFORMATION FOR FACILITATOR & NOTE TAKER

### Materials you will need

- at least 5 flip chart pieces of paper to write down what is discussed during the FGD
- sticky tape to tape the flip charts on to a wall or other vertical surface that the whole group can see
- markers of different colours to write on the flip charts
- a clipboard for the note taker
- a printed copy of Section A: Exercise information
- a printed copy of Section B: Introduction and individual informed consent
- a printed copy of Section C: Roster of participants
- lined A4 paper for taking notes
- pens to take notes
- a stapler to staple Sections A, B, and C, and the notes together
- sticky labels to write the exercise code on and stick this to each of the flip chart pages used by the facilitator, and to the pile of stapled papers collated by the note taker

### Getting the space ready

- Hang 2 sheets of flip chart paper next to one another on a wall (horizontally / landscape). Make sure that the papers are firmly secured to the surface of the wall with tape.
- Off to one side, hang another sheet of flip chart paper. This sheet will be used for generating lists that group members will need to refer to or keeping other relevant information that remains to be discussed (as a 'parking space' for issues to return to).

### Points to remember

- The discussion starts with identifying the seasons in a year, and characterizing each season and the activities that occur, to create a very specific calendar for the particular village.
- Remember to record the symbols used on the calendar in a key/legend.
- Remember to list the crops grown in the village on a separate flip chart sheet. It is important to achieve consensus on the three most important crops for the village before moving on to make the calendar for the crop-related activities.
- Remember to use the prompts to guide the participants through the exercise. The goal is to record as much information as possible.

### Roles and responsibilities

#### During the exercise

During the exercise, the facilitator and note taker have distinct roles and responsibilities:

Facilitator: In addition to facilitating the discussion, which includes drawing information out participants, making sure that everyone has a chance to speak, and moving a constructive discussion forward, the facilitator also will draw the calendar and maintain the lists.

Note taker: The note taker makes sure that each and every participant is read the Section B: Introduction and Individual informed consent, and that the roster is completed with their details. The note taker will also take notes during the discussion. It is important to record what is said – if you can also indicate who said it that is important too. The following should be included in notes:

- Any disagreements in the group – record what is said as the disagreement is worked out.
- Any local changes that have occurred (e.g., "it used to be like X, but now it is like Y").
- Any local cultural knowledge that the group discusses.

- *Body language* – you might notice that as a particular person is speaking, someone else “rolls” his or her eyes – such language is telling. If such occasion arises, you may record what the body language was and what was being talked about when that particular ‘body language’ occurred.
- *Proverbs/adages: language is culture!* If there are local sayings that people use in their local languages that express relevant cultural ideas about bananas, agriculture, weather, gender roles, etc. --- please include these. There will be NO English translation for these sayings, but you should note them down in the local vernacular language and then give what the ‘gist’ or the meaning of the saying is in English.
- *Calendar icons:* make sure that at the end of the exercise there is a comprehensive “legend” in the notes so that all the icons/symbols are defined.

At the end of the exercise

- *The facilitator and note taker should sit together to read, discuss together, enhance and expand upon the notes taken during the exercise. Based on what you both recall about the exercise, please add any information that is missing.*
- *Make sure that the icon legend is complete.*
- *Please translate the calendar into English.*
- *Remember to put the code of the exercise on both the flip charts and the notes.*
- *Photograph the calendar before folding it and giving to the supervisor for safe keeping.*
- *Finally, write up your assessment of the exercise – what worked well, what you would try next time to increase participation, etc.*
- *These notes are extremely important to analyzing the calendar information at a later date. Therefore, please try to be as complete and clear as possible!*